



Water On

Newsletter No. 7

January 2014

Mike's Mop Up

Welcome to 2014 – where do the weeks and months go!!

Firstly I want to say a big thank you to everyone who gave Southern Rural Fire their precious time to assist in many ways during a busy 2013 year. Your efforts were much appreciated.

Secondly I want to congratulate all recipients of awards at our 10th birthday celebration and annual awards event last November. Achievement of Levels 2 & 3 National Certificates in Fire & Rescue Services (Vegetation) demonstrates your commitment to competency based training.

There is clearly some competition for many of the other awards with very little separating the top 3 contenders in most cases. Your commitment doesn't go unnoticed and I would like to acknowledge the effort of all recipients (both individuals and teams) in attainment of these awards, well done.

As we move into another year who knows exactly what the next few months will deliver weather and fire wise. One thing is certain, we will get another fine day and yes, we will have more fires.

It is easy after a relatively wet and quiet period like we have had to become a little complacent. Our challenge is to retain a high level of **Situational Awareness** by always being aware of what is going on around us, but more importantly anticipating what is likely to happen later, tomorrow or next week.

We need to **Manage the Unexpected** by proactively developing and maintaining a work-safe culture through risk-aware behaviours and systems.

High Reliability Organisations (HRO) operate to the following 5 values:

1. Pre-occupation with failure

Accept that human error will happen and create a culture where people can freely report accidents, incidents, broken equipment etc. We highlight events and experience (good and bad) in order for people to learn and not become overconfident.

2. Reluctance to simplify

An unwillingness to simplify, a HRO has the ability to collect, analyse and prioritise all warning signs and avoid making any assumptions regarding the cause of failure. It also encourages different opinions.

3. Sensitivity to operations

Ability to obtain and maintain the bigger picture while anticipating potential future failures and keeping in touch with frontline workers.

4. Commitment to resilience

Ability to cope with and bounce back from errors and unexpected events and learn from past experience both within the organisation and from other industries.

5. Deference to expertise

Makes decisions at the lowest level possible and encourage communication at all levels & use of all expertise regardless of their role within the organisational hierarchy.



Mike's Mop Up cont.

Operating to these HRO values will lead to a **State of Mindfulness** or **Situational Awareness**.

1% increase in Mindfulness = 30% decrease in errors

Situational Awareness is “the ability to see the bad things coming”. HRO’s require everyone to promote a ‘**Work-Safe**’ environment, be ‘**Risk Aware**’ and be prepared to ‘**Say No**’. I encourage everyone in Southern Rural Fire to embrace HRO. We don’t want to be saying I never saw it coming. (to read more on High Reliability Organisations go to:

<http://www.southernruralfire.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Files/Fire-Fighter---Fire-Note---Sep-2009.pdf>



Photos:
Yarnell Hill Fire
Arizona
June 2013

These photos were sent before the 18 hotshot fire fighters were fatally overrun by flames in the Arizona blaze in June 2013, a reminder of High Reliability Organisation and Situational Awareness.

On that note I will finish by encouraging everyone to make themselves familiar with our Health & Safety Management System (more on that later in the newsletter), report accidents, near misses and new hazards.

Enjoy 2014 and be safe out there!

Wajax Competitions - March 14,15,16

The Glenorchy Volunteer Rural Fire Force will be hosting the Otago-Southland Wajax competitions. This is a fun event and a great opportunity to meet other rural fire fighters from around the lower South Island.

If you're interested in entering a team just let Sally know and she will organise the rest.
sally@southernruralfire.org.nz or 0800 77 33 63.

If your keen but can't quite make up a team, let Sally know, she will be able to hook you up with other people.

Health and Safety

2013 saw one minor injury sustained by one of our VRFF members, received while putting a portable pump away on a fire appliance following a training event.

Additional to this there was one near miss reported on 20 December 2013 where a native vine scratched across the face of a rural fire officer while moving through bush at a vegetation fire.

Also on the 20th December 2013, one injury accident occurred at a vegetation fire being attended by New Zealand Fire Service personnel. This was an eye injury from a stick to the eye while undertaking suppression operations and necessitated a visit to the local doctor that night.

Both incidents are reminders of the importance of wearing the Protective Personal Equipment (PPE).

A total of three separate vehicle accidents involving five SRFA vehicles were reported during 2013. The first two involved tankers making contact with one another at incidents, the third the result of a vehicle hitting a SRFA staff vehicle from behind. All vehicle accidents resulted in minor damage to SRFA vehicles concerned and no injuries resulted.

Please continue to report all accidents or near misses.

Medical assessments are continuing at a number of locations with Southroads Lumsden and Blackmount VRFF completing their pack tests in December. Guidelines for personnel management of those that are unable to complete medicals and/or pack tests will be developed and formalised in the near future.

The full January Health and Safety Newsletter can be found on our website:

www.southernruralfire.org.nz For Fire Fighters



Fire Weather Information



Online

Now the Rural Fire Danger page is up and running we hope you are finding it useful for your everyday lives and for monitoring the fire danger, currently it's telling us we have had a lot of rain!

National Rural Fire Authority has thrown out the old Metconnect weather system and developed a new predictive service with NIWA that draws on data from around 200 weather stations.

The weather information can be used by rural fire managers to better forecast local weather conditions, potential daily fire behavior, fuel moisture conditions, and potential fire danger.

Currently all Rural Fire Authorities and NZ Fire Service personnel have access to the basic Fire Weather System and its two and six day forecasts via the NRFA website. For more comprehensive information you need to sign up via this link <http://fireweather.nrfa.org.nz/>

The new Fire Weather System is much more comprehensive than the old Metconnect, Southern Rural Fire will make a time and visit each organization to help people understand its capabilities.

Contact Sally if you need a hand.

The Hot Spot

Who are the fire fighters in your neighbourhood? This is an opportunity to see who makes up the Southern Rural Fire Fighting team.

Name: Alison Wright

Nicknames (past or present): Dippy / Baa Baa

Which fire crew are you involved with? Milford Emergency Response Team (MERT)

What's the coolest thing about your fire crew?

It is made up of multinationalities...and rapidly becoming taken over by 'pommies'!

This Southern Rural Fire Team is also the result of a vision that a few people had, and that a number of organisations and members of the community made happen. Milford is a very unique place and has many unique needs that the MERT team provides.

What roles do you have with rural fire?

My role is mainly outside rural fire – we have the largest rainfall in New Zealand! My expertise is medical and I'm a newcomer to rural fire – but keen to learn. I'm currently trying to get into the OIC role, however at the moment I am eager and wanting to do everything myself! I also have been told I need to be bossier...folk back home in the UK would probably not agree with that.

Where are you likely to be found at 10pm on a Saturday night and what would you be doing?

Probably eating 'Nutella' straight from the jar whilst on call, and when not on call more than likely in bed from a busy day exploring.

Where is the coolest place in the world and why?

Lincoln, UK – As it full of a lot of family and friends who I love.

How long have you been involved in rural fire? Just two months.

Why are you involved with rural fire? It came with the job.

What do you enjoy most about rural fire?

Have yet to see an actual rural fire since I arrived in NZ 2 months ago, but I enjoy being part of a community team.

If you could be anyone for a day who would you be and why?

Me, but fitter, stronger, clever, patient, wise, and gorgeous!

If you could teach someone one thing about fire what would it be?

Don't ignite something which has the potential to be uncontrollable.

What's your favourite quote?

Man up

Team Profile

Milford Sound VRRF is one team that sees fewer fires than most teams. With over eight meters of rain in the Milford area, vegetation fires are rarely a concern.

Under the Forest and Rural Fires Act the Rural Fire Authority is responsible for vegetation fire and building fires outside of urban areas.

In most areas of Southland Southern Rural Fire has an agreement with the fire service that they will respond to structure fires as they have the skill and available staff to do so. In Milford this isn't possible as the fire service is over 1.5 hours away.

The Milford VRRF is more than just fire and are officially known as Milford Emergency Response Team (MERT).

MERT is a very active team responding to medical calls, motor vehicle accidents, and evacuations from ships. They also work with other emergency services to prepare for tsunamis, oil spills, earthquakes and anything else you can think of.

People working in Milford Sound come from around the world for seasonal work. With between 25-30 volunteers working shifts, training can be difficult to organise.

MERT along with Milford Community Trust, Southern Rural Fire and National Rural Fire Authority has contributed to the purpose built four wheel drive truck designed to not only attend fires but also motor vehicle accidents.

MERT with support from Otago Community Trust, Central Lakes Trust Milford Community Trust, Emergency Management Southland, Environment Southland, Southland District Council, Southern Rural Fire and National Rural Fire Authority have also built a Fire Station to house the Fire truck, equipment and act as a training centre for volunteers.

In November 2013 a Team Leader position was established to support the volunteers by providing training, administration support, equipment checks and equipment maintenance, on top of responding to daily medical incidents.

Alison Wright has taken a five month sabbatical from her Paramedic job in the UK to fill the temporary summer role at Milford Sound, to find out more about Alison check out the Hot Spot.



10th Birthday Party!

A big thank you to all those who attended the 10 year celebrations, photos of the event can be found on our website www.southernruralfire.org.nz, For Fire Fighters.

National Certificates

National Certificate in Fire and Rescue - Level 2

- Bruce Alsop
- Frank O'Brien
- Ken Bradley
- Robert McNaughton
- Brett Cordes
- Roger Mariu

National Certificate in Fire and Rescue - Level 3

- Neil Robertson
- Keri Tuna
- Warren Heslip
- Chris McAulay
- Simon Jamieson

Leadership Scholarship

The leadership Scholarship is a new award for Southern Rural Fire. The Scholarship is in recognition of people who show great leadership skills. They don't have to hold a leadership position but display the attributes that contribute to great leadership. The Leadership Scholarship includes attendance to an Anakiwa Outward Bound Leadership Course as well as travel to and from the Picton region.

Winner: Matthew Beer - Drummond Volunteer Rural Fire Force



Medical First Responders Award

Medical First Responders are Volunteer Rural Fire Force Teams who also attend St John calls. These can range from medical calls to homes to car accidents.

Medical First Responder teams are rated on the level of training they undertake each year along with their regular and positive interaction with St John training staff.

Winner: Blackmount Volunteer Rural Fire Force

Depot Awards

Depot awards are based on annual audits of equipment, including truck and trailer standards as well as Personal Protective Safety Equipment.

Category 1 -

More than 2 vehicles or trailer kits

Winner:

Blackmount Volunteer Rural Fire Force

Category 2 - 1 vehicle or trailer kit

Winner: Southwood Export



Photo: Hedgehope VRFF displaying the fire fighting PPE through the ages.